As I Remember Them—*Professor Frank Stewart*

By C. C. Goodwin

PROFESSOR STEWART was one of the extraordinary men of the west. He was tall and slim and angular; he might have passed for a twin brother of Abraham Lincoln, though he had a handsomer face than the man of men of his generation. He was Indiana born and could not have received very much schooling, for at eighteen he volunteered in Joe Lane's Indiana regiment and went to the Mexican war. He fought through all that long day at Buena Vista and could describe it in much more graphic phrases than any historian ever has.

He was one of the original California Argonauts. If he was not deeply schooled in his youth, he made up for it by incessant study; he was not a miner, but a wonderful geologist, botanist and all around scientist. He was familiar with the classics, wrote some fine short poems, but his joy was to grasp an abstruse scientific problem and never rest until it was solved. He would rather, from the shells and rocks, calculate the age of the earth than to attend a banquet. He joined Walker's expedition to capture Nicaragua, his reasoning being that it would be a mercy to the people of that country to give them a stable government. They conquered the country, but because of Walker's utter incapacity and unfairness, his command broke up into fragments; Walker, with a few followers, was captured and shot, and Stewart made his way on foot to San Juan, Costa Rica, from there reached the coast and in some way caught a vessel and returned to California.

He was editing a newspaper at Plainville, Cal., when one day "Snow Shoe" Thompson—he carried the mails on snow shoes over the Sierras between Plainville and Genoa, Nevada—showed him a sample of rock and asked him what it was, explaining that it clogged the sluices and bothered the placer miners in Gold canyon.

Stewart told him that he did not know, but that it looked as though it might be sulphurate of silver as described in the books, and advised him to have it assayed when he reached Sacramento. Thompson did so with astounding results. The return was nearly $1,000 per ton in gold and over $1,200 in silver. It has never been clear which assay was made first, the one in Sacramento or the one in Nevada City. But they were nearly at the same time.

Stewart went early to the Comstock. Mount Davidson rises 2,000 feet high just west of the Comstock lode. At first the pitch of the vein was to the west. Professor Silliman being early called to Virginia City to give expert testimony as to the great lode, predicted that the heart of the Comstock would be found under Mount Davidson. This was published in Silliman's testimony. Stewart read it, and with a laugh said if that was true then God Almighty had made a mistake, and had placed the gangue on the wrong wall.

When explored a little below two hundred feet, the vein suddenly quit. It did not pinch out—it just stopped. Then short drifts were run east from the bottoms of the shafts, then from the east ends of the drifts shallow winzes were sunk and lo, there was the ledge found, pitching east. Now the hoisting works are a third of a mile down the mountain to the east. By some upheaval the crest of the ledge had been pushed back and broken off so that its natural pitch to the east was reversed near the surface and turned to the west. It deceived Silliman, but did not Stewart.

Stewart explored all the camps of Nevada. His old reports on Tuscarora, though discounted at the time, have been vindicated by the pick, drill and dynamite.

In early days he gave a series of lectures in California and received the sobriquet of "Earthquake" Stewart, because of the theory that he put out, that the tremblors in California were caused, not by displacements below the surface of the earth, but because of electrical disturbances in the air and in the earth near the surface, and predicted that when railroad tracks and telegraph wires were stretched across the continent, connecting the eastern and far western states, these disturbances would in a measure be neutralized, that the tremblors would grow less and less severe, but that theer would be tremendous electrical storms in the Missouri and Mississippi valleys.

For like reasons he insisted that California was not a good state for children to grow up in; that they would be high strung, with abnormal, nervous temperaments, and that like too early ripened apples, would never reach entire excellence.

He was the kindest-hearted of men, but became impatient in a moment if anything like a question of his geological conclusions was asked.

After he had spent a month in Tuscarora, he returned to Virginia City and calling at the Enterprise, was enthusiastic over the new camp.

A gentleman from New York had brought letters to me and we were conversing when the professor came in. He at once plunged into a description of the camp, and after talking a few moments he suddenly stopped with the remark: